



ITUC INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
CSI CONFÉDÉRATION SYNDICALE INTERNATIONALE
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IGB INTERNATIONALER GEWERKSCHAFTSBUND

GREENPEACE

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His Excellency Mr Ban Ki Moon
United Nations Secretary-General
UN Headquarters
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USA
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Dear Mr Secretary-General,

We are writing to you to express our deep concern about a potentially very damaging change to the governance of the Internet. As I am sure you will agree, the Internet represents one of the greatest engines for economic growth, development and transparency of information the world has ever seen. We have all come to rely upon free and unfettered access to its global reach. It has also become an indispensable tool for civil society in general, and international labour and environmental movements in particular.

We believe the Internet as we currently know it is at risk from an attempt by some governments to impose solely governmental control over this extraordinarily valuable global resource, which has until now benefitted from a unique system of multi-stakeholder direction. As you can appreciate, an open, global Internet is an essential infrastructure for the pursuit of the aims of our organisations, the ITUC and Greenpeace, with a combined total of 178 million members in 158 countries, as well as an important tool for a sustainable economy and active citizenship.

We believe you must intervene for the overall benefit of citizens throughout the world. During the Rio+20 Summit process, we appreciated your call for UN processes to be open to the mobilisation and inputs of civil society, not only government leaders. Rio+20 built on a growing practice of the UN to promote multi-stakeholder approaches to address complex, global socio-economic issues.

You will recall that at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis in 2005, Heads of State and Government decided that **a multi-stakeholder approach** remained the most appropriate form of governance for the Internet – our most technically innovative and truly global communication medium.

It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that certain countries are preparing to undermine this inclusive governance model. Their chosen vehicle appears to be the forthcoming World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12), being organised by the ITU to be held in Dubai in December 2012. The task of the WCIT is to review the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs), which were established in 1988.

We are becoming increasingly concerned at the lack of transparency inherent in the approach of the ITU in its preparations for this conference. The ITU Governing Council recently declined to accept the entirely appropriate proposal of the ITU Secretary-General, Dr Hamadoun Toure, that all stakeholders should be given free access to all the preparatory documentation for the conference. This decision on the part of governments alone undermines any suggestion that ITU might itself constitute a multi-stakeholder organisation. Clearly it does not meet the terms of the decision previously taken by the WSIS at Heads of Government level.



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Given the importance you clearly attach to the involvement of the private sector and civil society in the work of the United Nations as a whole, we want to draw your attention to our concerns about these disturbing developments. Several proposals have already been submitted for consideration by the WCIT which seek to undermine the currently free, open and inherently democratic governance of the Internet. This may just be the tip of the iceberg.

The internet spans a wider collection of issues than any other medium, including innovation and sustainable economic growth, trade, environment policy and implementation, social policy and services, health, intellectual property, human rights including workers' rights, and freedom of expression and association issues. This surely reinforces the requirement for a truly multi-stakeholder approach to be taken to its governance. But such an approach means all actors having an equal stake, and hence a say in decisions which affect their interests.

Assuming present plans proceed according to schedule, the WCIT conference will be held in Dubai for two weeks behind closed doors with only the representatives of Governments (mostly from the Telecoms Ministries or Telecoms Regulators – not other affected Ministries) fully party to what transpires. Is this really the sort of transparency in governance with which the UN should be associated in 2012? We believe it is essential that all concerned with the use and management of the Internet be given the opportunity to consider the full implications of any new proposals that might unduly fetter the free and liberally governed mechanism from which we all currently benefit.

Your vision, as set out in your Five Year Action Agenda for the United Nations, calls for transformative, multi-stakeholder partnerships and outreach to new constituencies. Rather than another closed-door, traditional, intergovernmental negotiation, we ask for your help and leadership to transform the WCIT into a forum that advances your vision of inclusion and outreach. The alternative is likely to be a secretive meeting of a narrow representation of governments, without access to the expertise and views of all concerned with the use and management of the Internet, including the full technical community and civil society.

We urge you to intervene on behalf of the true Multi-stakeholder Internet Community in favour of the full implementation of the Multi-stakeholder approach to governance which was approved at summit level in Tunis in 2005.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Naidoo'.

Dr. Kumi Naidoo
Executive Director, Greenpeace International

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Burrow'.

Ms Sharan Burrow
General Secretary, ITUC

Cc: UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Wu Hongbo

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Member States' Foreign, Communications, Labour and Environment Ministers